

## Launch of the national initiative SVASTIK to communicate India's scientifically validated traditional knowledge to the society

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India is endowed with a rich legacy of traditional knowledge and practices touching several spheres of life and traversing several S&T domains. Our traditional practices exist in synergy between human needs and nature, often balancing resources and requirements in local context. However, with time, India has been witnessing erosion in people's faith towards our traditional knowledge. Creating awareness and disseminating evidence-based traditional practices/knowledge to the society is of utmost importance to instil a sense of pride and confidence in the knowledge that we have inherited.

Recognising the importance of the subject matter, Hon'ble Prime Minister and President, CSIR Society, Shri Narendra Modi suggested in the CSIR Society meeting this year that information related to scientific validation of the traditional knowledge/practices need to be communicated effectively to the public. The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) was asked to lead the efforts to collaborate with the relevant partners from across the country and implement the initiative on 'Communicating India's Scientifically Validated Traditional Knowledge to the Society'. CSIR-National Institute of Science Communication and Policy Research (CSIR-NIScPR), New Delhi has been assigned as the nodal organisation to put into effect this national initiative supported by a Steering Committee of eminent national experts (Chair- Prof B N Jagatap, Senior Professor, IIT Bombay) and Monitoring Committee (Chair – DG CSIR & Secretary, DSIR).

Under the guidance of Prof. Ranjana Aggarwal, Director CSIR-NIScPR, a team of scientists from CSIR-NIScPR [Dr G Mahesh (Adviser), Dr Charu Lata (Lead), Dr Paramananda Barman, Dr Suman Ray, Ms Charu Verma and Ms Shubhada Kapil] has launched this initiative with a brand name/ tag line "SVASTIK"- Scientifically Validated Societal Traditional Knowledge on 25 August 2021. SVASTIK's objective is to conserve the practice of the right tradition, inculcate scientific temper of verifying tradition in a scientific manner and instill confidence in citizens regarding the scientific value of our traditional knowledge/practices. As a part of this initiative, simplified creative content on India's traditional knowledge is being disseminated through various digital platforms in English, Hindi, and different regional languages to cater to a wider audience.

The first scientifically validated traditional knowledge disseminated under this initiative was the "Metal Mirrors of Aranmula". Aranmula, a small village in Kerala is known for its unique mirror making tradition that has thrived for centuries and is the home to the traditional craft of making handcrafted, handheld metal mirrors. This tradition is also connected with the cultural heritage. These metal mirrors have been an integral item in the wedding trousseau of brides in some communities. Extensive archaeometallurgical researches done by Dr Sharada Srinivasan, NIAS, Bengaluru revealed that these metal mirrors are made of a binary copper-tin alloy (of 32-33% tin alloyed to copper) (<https://www.sahapedia.org/metal-mirror-marvel-aranmula>). The Aranmula metal mirrors yield a perfect point image as compared to the modern day mercury-coated glass mirrors which do not give a point image due to the refraction through the thin layer of glass and hence have a better quality of image and reflectivity when freshly polished.



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## METAL MIRRORS OF ARANMULA, KERALA

A unique metal mirror-making tradition has thrived for centuries in Kerala.

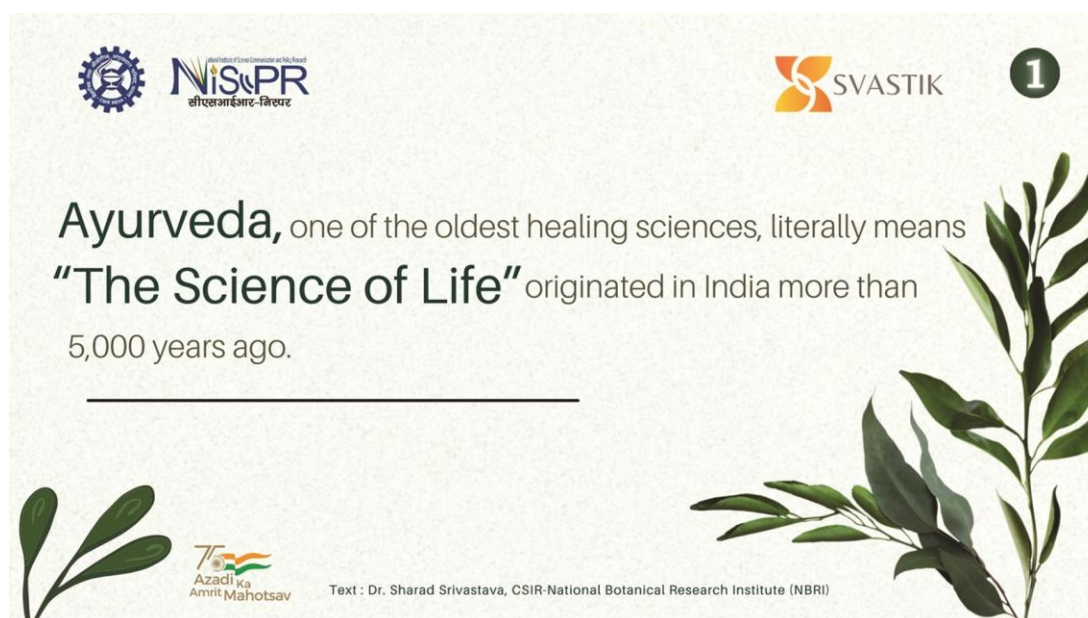
The village of Aranmula is home to the traditional craft of making handcrafted, handheld metal mirrors.

Low-tech methods and locally available organic and recyclable materials have been used to develop the distinctive mirror.

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Text & Images: Prof. Sharada Srinivasan, National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS)

The second dissemination under the national initiative SVASTIK was on 'URO-5'. This synergistic herbal formulation has been prepared from five classic medicinal plants namely *Berberis lycium*, *Tribulus terrestris*, *Bergenia ciliata*, *Phyllanthus niruri* and *Tinospora cordifolia*, traditionally known for their medicinal properties against kidney stones (urolithiasis). The product was conceptualised and developed by the team led by Dr Sharad Srivastava at CSIR-NBRI, in association with CSIR-IITR and KGMU, Lucknow. Preclinical assessment and clinical trial of URO-5 have been found to be effective against urolithiasis which is one of the most prevalent urological diseases across the globe, and the product can reduce upto 1 cm of kidney stones and also help in stone expulsion.



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## Ayurveda, one of the oldest healing sciences, literally means "The Science of Life" originated in India more than 5,000 years ago.

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 Azadi Ka  
 Amrit Mahotsav

Text : Dr. Sharad Srivastava, CSIR-National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI)

Anyone can reach and follow this initiative through @NIScPR\_SVASTIK on all popular social media platforms.

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